




Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

Laboratories Administration

Robert A. Myers, Ph.D., Director
1770 Ashland Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21205

DATE: March 26, 2020

TO: Medical Laboratory Directors, Local Health Officers
and Health Care Providers

FROM: Robert A. Myers, Ph.D. 
Director, Laboratories Administration

RE: **UPDATED COVID-19 Testing Priorities Guidance**

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Laboratories Administration continues to update its guidance in response to the emerging, rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). Priorities for testing are outlined below in accordance with MDH Secretary of Health Robert R. Neall's recent Directive (<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.23.2020-Sec-Neall-Healthcare-Matters-Order.pdf>)

- **PRIORITY A**
 - Hospitalized patients, who should be tested by the most expeditious means available (either a hospital lab, private lab, or the State Laboratory).
- **PRIORITY B**
 - Symptomatic Emergency Medical Service Personnel, healthcare workers, and law enforcement personnel (should be tested by available means).
- **PRIORITY C**
 - Symptomatic patients in nursing homes, long-term care facilities, or in congregate living facilities housing individuals who are medically fragile.
- **PRIORITY D**
 - Symptomatic high-risk unstable patients whose care would be altered by a diagnosis of COVID-19.

On the MDH Laboratories Administration test order form you MUST indicate the specimen's Priority Level.

The MDH Laboratories Administration no longer requires prior approval for specimen submission; however, the laboratory cannot accept lower priority specimens for COVID-19 testing. The MDH Laboratories Administration will continue to conduct COVID-19 testing in support of local health departments for outbreak and death investigations.

Please refer to the most recent CDC COVID-19 specimen collection guidelines at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>. For questions or concerns, please contact the Laboratories Administration during normal business hours at 443-681-3791, 443-681-3792 or 443-681-3800 (main number). For all calls after hours please contact the Laboratories Administration at 410-925-3121.

cc: Frances Phillips
Dr. David Blythe
Dr. Monique Duwell
Dr. Cliff Mitchell
Dr. Richard Brooks
Ruth Thompson